

# Birds preferring tropical climate take a fancy to Kuttanad

## Change in migration pattern is suspected to be due to climate change

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A significant shift in local migration patterns appears to be taking place as indicated by the findings of a waterbird survey held in the Upper Kuttanad region.

A detailed assessment of the survey, conducted as part of Asian Waterbird Census 2018 on Sunday, indicates that many winged guests previously uncommon to Kuttanad wetlands are flocking here for breeding.

Birders said that some of the species preferring

tropical climate conditions of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh had been choosing this part of the region. "Painted stork and Spot-billed pelican were not commonly found here a few years ago. But in recent years, their numbers have gone up indicating a change in the bird migration patterns. Although we could not say with all certainty, fingers definitely point towards global warming and climate change for the change in migration patterns," B. Sreekumar, president, Kottayam Nature



Painted stork and white stork (right) are among the waterbirds spotted during a survey in Upper Kuttanad on Sunday.

Society, told *The Hindu*.

As many as 41,576 birds of 55 continental and local species have been recorded during the survey conducted at Ikkaramukku, Thakazhi, Karuvatta,



Smrithivanam, Illichira, Melpadam, Mangottachira, Pandi, Vallamkadavu, Pallippad, Moorthitta, and Karumady. Indian spot-billed duck, White stork, Glossy ibis, Oriental white

ibis, Garganey northern pintail, and Eurasian marsh harrier are some of the species recorded during the survey.

"We have been conducting the waterbird census for the past five years. This year, we have conducted survey in 10 wetlands in Upper Kuttanad. One of the major changes we noticed over the years is the arrival and breeding of species preferring tropical climate. Their numbers are increasing. This year delay in paddy cultivation also helped the arrival of birds in large numbers," said Harikumar Mannar, a birder.

The Asian Waterbird Census is part of the global International Waterbird

Census (IWC) carried out each January as a voluntary activity. It makes the public aware of issues related to wetland and waterbird conservation. The information gathered during the survey would be used to promote the designation and management of protected areas, Ramsar Sites, and Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) among others.

In Upper Kuttanad, the survey was jointly organised by Social Forestry wing of the Kerala Forest Department, Kottayam Nature Society, and the Alappuzha Natural History Society. A total of 48 birders from the region took part in the process.